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Patient Safety

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Metro Health Hospital

A Priority for Past, Present and Future

by Cheri Rugh

Metro Health Hospital's hall of fame would be full of the awards, honors and recognition it has received over the past 10 years for exemplary performance in patient safety, quality and satisfaction – if there was such a hall to view. Instead, it's the halls of Metro Health Hospital that are full of living exemplars of patient-focused health care who are continually evaluating and refining what they do on a daily basis to improve the care and health of the patients that visit. "Metro Health Hospital's patient safety and quality programs are not about reaching benchmarks and receiving awards, they are about patient care. We want to be sure we are using appropriate intervention to the patient at the appropriate time," said **William Cunningham, D.O., MHA**, executive vice-president & chief medical officer, Metro Health Hospital.

Metro Health Hospital of Grand Rapids, called Metropolitan Hospital until a recent move and name change, has always been known for its high level of patient care. The medical staff, administrative staff and the board of directors have historically resolved that patient safety and satisfaction is the hospital's number-one mission. "At Metro Health, the physicians and hospital staff have always taken pride in their patient care and worked to lead the charge, not follow the pack, when addressing patient safety concerns," said Dr. Cunningham. Not unique, some might say. But what is unique is the system-wide commitment, at all levels of the organization, that the staff of Metro Health Hospital must serve as champions of patient safety and ultimately patient satisfaction.

"It has become part of our culture. Metro Health's dedication to patient quality and satisfaction permeates the organization, and frankly, I think this is our greatest accomplishment. The loyalty of our patients and physicians to the 'Metro Way' has enabled us to realize our dreams of being the first suburban hospital in Grand Rapids," Dr. Cunningham added.

While patient safety and quality have always been an organizational priority, it wasn't until 10 years ago that Metro Health Hospital established a formal patient safety program. In 2000, the area of patient safety was scrutinized and brought to public attention with the release of the Institute of Medicine's report *To Err is Human*. The report asserted that anywhere from 44,000 to 98,000 people die each year in the hospital due to medical errors. At the time, Metro Health was already working on several patient safety programs, but the release of this report caused everyone in the health care industry to become more serious about it. "One of the most positive results to come about from the release of the report was that it awakened efforts to improve patient safety," said Dr. Cunningham. ►

Patient Safety at Metro Health Hospital *Continued*

While most initial efforts were directed at avoiding medication errors, the field of patient safety and quality has since grown to include systems and processes that span the entire health care spectrum. "The foundation of patient safety is communication. Communication is at the root of all things – good and bad – that happen in the hospital," said Cindy Allen-Fedor, vice president of outcomes management, patient safety officer. The first task to improve Metro Health patient safety was to open the lines of communication and establish a non-punitive safety program that would allow for medical error reporting free from fault or discipline. "By establishing a culture of patient safety the Metro Health Hospital leadership was really saying that they recognized health care is very complex and most errors occur because of the system the staff works in – not because of individuals," Allen-Fedor said. The board approved a formal resolution with the philosophy that there are human factors which lead to errors. The non-punitive reporting system takes the focus or blame off the shoulders of

the individual and focuses it on the system that led to error.

Since the early establishment of the non-punitive reporting system, the opportunities to learn, improve and further refine the hospital's patient safety and satisfaction efforts have skyrocketed. "Before this reporting system, we had a very, very low rate of reporting of medical errors. People were afraid to speak up or share their experiences," Dr. Cunningham said. After years of fine tuning, the system now encompasses reports that run the gamut from a "true" medical incident to success stories. The "frontline" health care staff are the eyes and ears of the entire hospital. They are the best resource Metro Health has to identify problems and recommend solutions.

"Our non-punitive reporting system now includes reports of events such as 'near misses,' which are analyzed and used for opportunities to improve, and 'good catches,' which are reports of an "almost error" that can lead to system improvements and opportunities for other staff to learn from," said Allen-Fedor. The hospital has specific protocols in

September 2002, the Metropolitan Hospital Board of Directors resolved there would be a non-punitive safety program:

"Metropolitan Hospital Board of Directors resolved that Metropolitan Hospital will implement a non-punitive comprehensive safety program designed to:

- **eliminate the chance for error and accidents**
- **make it easier for people to do the right thing**
- **identify and correct failure before an individual is significantly harmed."**

place to investigate and respond to each report of an incident including *root cause analysis*, which tears down and analyzes anything and everything that was involved in the incident to determine its cause and ways to put mechanisms in place to be sure the same type of error doesn't occur. Metro Health also uses *failure mode event analysis*, which proactively asks the question "what could go wrong?" and then prioritizes

Metro Health Quality & Safety Achievements

S Best Acute-Care Hospitals Award from Total Benchmark Solutions (TBS), February 2007. Metro Health, one of only five hospitals in Michigan to receive the award, was recognized for its treatment of heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia.

A Received national recognition for 2007 from HealthGrades in its ninth annual Hospital Quality in America study for outstanding clinical achievements.

F Chosen in 2006 by CareScience as a Select Practice National Quality Leader in the Category of Medically Managed Acute Myocardial Infarction for demonstrating a combination of superior clinical outcomes and exceptional efficiency of medically managed heart attacks when compared to other hospitals in the U.S.

E Top 100 Quality Award from Total Benchmark Solutions (TBS), January 2006. The award was given based on Metro Health Hospital's overall performance on Medicare's "Hospital Compare" website, ranking Metro fourth overall out of 2,053 hospitals nationally and number one in the nation for heart attack care.

T In 2006, Metro Health Hospital received 971.5 of a possible 1,000 points for implementation of safety practices in inpatient care. This score put Metro Health Hospital at 257 out of 1,204 hospitals.

Y Recipient of 2003, 2004 and 2005 Governor's Award of Excellence for Inpatient Services, Emergency Services and Metro Health Physician Office Services.

those things that might have the most adverse affects on patients and proactively addresses them.

Most frequently, incident reports and subsequent investigations result in the redesign of a system to address or eliminate the problem. Metro Health staff use of LEAN, the Toyota quality improvement methodology, helps guide system changes that focus on removing waste and unnecessary effort to support what patients and families value in the hospital processes. "Focusing on the patient through the LEAN system processing forces us to evaluate a system or process based upon its merit. It discourages doing anything simply because that's the way it has always been done," Allen-Fedor said.

The combination of these medical incident reports and analysis efforts has lead to the implementation of several highly effective patient safety and quality programs. While the list is not comprehensive, provided below are highlights of those that have provided/offered the greatest merit to both the organization and ultimately to patients:

- Metro Health Hospital's establishment of a vice president of patient safety and quality position, which conveyed the organization's commitment to the improvement of patient safety and satisfaction.
- Establishment of a non-punitive comprehensive safety program, which encompasses the non-punitive reporting system of medical incidents.
- Hospitalist input and expertise gathered through participation in a weekly *Hospitalist Leadership Conference*. Metro Health utilizes ten hospitalists whose job it is to care for inpatients and to assist in quality and patient safety initiatives. This group of hospitalists meets with the chief medical officer each Monday to strategically plan for, and identify, patient safety and quality issues as well as physician satisfaction and patient satisfaction concerns. ➤



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Metro Health Hospital

Continued

- Review of inpatient care issues through *Clinical Care Conference*. Each morning, Metro cardiologists, hospitalists, case managers, social workers and clinical coordinators from the units meet to discuss patients, including their plans of care, concerns and discharge plans.
- Implementation of monthly *Executive Safety Walk Arounds*, a proactive patient safety program where a member of the organization's senior executive team visits a hospital unit and talks to frontline caregivers to proactively identify potential patient safety concerns that can be addressed before a problem occurs.
- Implementation of the monthly *Safety and Quality Management Action Council*. Comprised of all of the hospital directors, this council meets monthly to discuss ways to meet national patient safety goals, to problem solve and to conduct patient safety education that the directors and managers use to train their hospital unit staff.
- Publication of a bi-monthly journal titled *Metro Health Quality and Safety Journal* for staff and physicians. Journal articles feature hospital safety and quality initiatives in development or in place and a "lessons-learned" column, which offers examples of "real" problems or near misses experienced by Metro Health staff that others in the organization can learn from.

Metro Health Hospital's patient safety goals for 2007 include working to involve more patients and their families in the development of patient safety initiatives. "We want patients and members of their families to join our various patient safety committees and provide input on concerns they might have. We can use their input to help design systems within the organization that are patient friendly and that will increase patient understanding of what is needed of them once they leave our facility," Allen-Fedor said. The addition of the patient/family input component into Metro Health Hospital's patient safety initiatives will add yet another level of credibility as the hospital makes use of the opinions and reactions of the very audience that the patient safety programs are developed to serve.

"You will continue to see Metro Health Hospital 'lead the way' in patient safety. Our Board of Director's values it, our medical staff and employees demand it and our patients deserve it," said Dr. Cunningham. And the future for Metro Health Hospital patients looks bright - and much safer. ■